

Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani Sahab (May Allah Ta'ala protect and preserve him),  
Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

# Memories

## (Episode 31)

### Legal Status of *Taqleed*

The late respected Mahir ul-Qadri was a famous poet of Pakistan. At the same time, he had developed a good taste for reading religious books. He used to publish a literary-cum-educational monthly magazine named Faran. He once visited a Masjid for prayer which was run by some extremist Ahl-e-Hadith individuals. The person delivering the sermon publicly declared *Taqleed* as *Shirk* and the followers of the four *Madhhabs* as *Kafir* and *Mushrik*. Respected Mahir ul-Qadri Sahab was quite disturbed by this and asked me to write an essay about *Taqleed*. Based on what I had understood about *Taqleed* from my respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him), I wrote an article titled "What is *Taqleed*?" in an easy-to-understand style, and it was published in Faran magazine. I penned that article in our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) style, i.e. awash with positivity and altogether avoiding the least connotations of sarcasm or derision towards anyone. Neither did I desire to stir up any debates or arguments. However, soon after the publication of this article, a wave of critiques one after the other were published. One of them was "*At-Tahqeeq Fee Jawab it-Taqleed*" which was in book form, in which *Taqleed* was declared outright *Shirk* and this lowly one was proclaimed a *Kafir*. Another critique was published in eleven parts in the weekly "*Al-I'tisaam*" magazine which did not feature the same kind of bigotry as the book, rather overall, it was a purposeful, academic piece of writing. The author's name was not cited in the magazine, but it was later learned to be the writing of the famous Ahl-e-Hadith scholar Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ismail Salafi (may Allah's mercy be upon him).

Since debate and argument was not my aim, I did not even attempt to answer the objections raised. However, some time later when it was decided to publish the essay in book form, I re-reviewed it and added several additional topics, and at the same time I also commented on the evidences cited by the authors of those critiques without naming anyone.

It is through the grace and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala that this small book was widely read and many individuals wrote me letters stating that it cleared up many of their doubts and confusions. It was later translated into English, Arabic and Bengali languages as well.

### Editorship of Monthly *Al-Balagh* Magazine

In 1967, our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) decided to publish a monthly magazine from Darul Uloom and proposed "*Al-Balagh*" as its name. An editor was required for it. Maulana Khaleel Ur-Rahman Nu'mani Sahab was the Coordinator of Darul Uloom's publishing wing "*Maktaba Darul*

Uloom” at the time, and initially it was opined for him to be designated as the editor of this magazine. I was twenty-four years old at the time. Owing to my young age, my name was initially not considered for entrusting Al-Balagh’s editorship. From what I remember, it was one of my teachers who first proposed to our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) to make me its editor and Maulana Nu’māni its Coordinator. Before this, several of my essays had been published in various magazines and I would show every single one of my writings to our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) before its publication. Rather, whenever our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) had to give his views on any major national issue to newspapers, he had begun getting its first draft written by me. Therefore from his point of view, there was no hindrance to acting upon this proposal besides my young age. He therefore eventually accepted this proposal, and the first edition of Al-Balagh was published in Muharram 1387H, circa April 1967, under my editorship, which is Alhamdulillah continuing for the past fifty-five years until the writing of this text (26 Shawwal 1441H, equivalent to 18 June 2020).

I would write “Al-Balagh’s” editorial under the title “*Zikr-o-Fikr*” (Remembrance and Reflection). Alhamdulillah it was always well-received by readers, and heartening messages were also received from scholars and other prominent dignitaries. In his weekly “*Sidq*” magazine, Hazrat Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) went to the extent of declaring it the best monthly magazine of Pakistan, and he would also frequently publish excerpts from this unworthy one’s editorial in his magazine.

Regarding editorials, the notion in my mind was that they should not be mere commentaries on contemporary events; rather they should discuss and present propositions as to how to how to implement Islamic teachings related to the various spheres of Islamic life against the backdrop of contemporary societal context. Especially with respect to the doubts arising in the minds of Western-thought-inspired quarters of society, efforts should be made towards dispelling those doubts in an easy-to-understand manner. As a result of writing editorials for a long time with this goal in mind, a sizable collection of Islamic teachings pertaining to the social, economical, political, individual as well as collective life advocated by Islam had been assembled. The thought therefore arose to publish a collection of these editorials. A suitable name for this collection was “*Islam Aur Asr-e-Hazir*” (Islam and Contemporary Life) but dear honourable Maulana Samee Ul Haq Sahab had already published his editorials of “*Al-Haq*” magazine with this name. I therefore named my collection “*Asr-e-Hazir Mein Islam*” (Islam in Today’s Age) and it was published by Maktaba Darul Uloom. Later, the then-Coordinator of Maktaba Darul Uloom Maulana Farooq al-Qasmi Sahab felt that instead of one large volume, it should be published as smaller booklets according to the various topics. These editorials were then published as several smaller books: “*Islah-e-Muashirah*” (Reformation of Society), “*Hamara Nizam-e-Taleem*” (Our Educational System), “*Islam Aur Siyasat-e-Hazira*” (Islam and Contemporary Politics), “*Islam Aur Jiddat Pasandi*” (Islam and Modernism), “*Hamara Muashi Nizam*” (Our Economic System) and “*Nifaz-e-Shariat Aur Us Kay Masail*” (Implementing Shariah Laws and Related Issues)

## **A Trip to NWFP<sup>1</sup> in 1967**

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<sup>1</sup> Translator: North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan, later renamed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

That same year, a Wing Commander of Pakistan Air Force visited our respected father and informed him that it was decided for a new department to be established in the Air Force named "Islamic Education". The objective of this department was to introduce Islamic teachings to the officers and staff of the Air Force, so that the character traits of a true Muslim can be inculcated in them. He made two requests to our respected father regarding this. Firstly, that he should render his support in drafting the procedures of this department. And secondly, that he should provide them with an Islamic scholar who was familiar with the English Language and could oversee this department. He would be initially appointed to the post of Squadron Leader and would also be eligible for promotion in due time. At the same time, he requested our respected father to release me for this position. Since the headquarters of the Air Force were based in Peshawar, it meant that I would have to move to Peshawar and also suspend my services in Darul Uloom. Our respected father advised, and I was also of the same opinion, that it is not appropriate for me to discontinue whatever shoddy services I was rendering to Darul Uloom. However, one proposal was for me to render my services to this new department during its initial stages in order to assist in laying its foundations, and to return to Darul Uloom once it was established on sustainable foundations. But before acting upon even this proposal, it was considered appropriate to visit Peshawar to assess the situation therein and to gauge the extent to which we could contribute towards this, and to make a final decision regarding this only afterwards. Our respected father therefore instructed us two brothers to travel to Peshawar and apprise ourselves of the state of affairs there. When it was time for us to leave, Maulana Hakeem Sayyid Musharraf Husain Sahab (who is more of a friend than a nephew) got ready to accompany us. And thus the three of us arrived in Peshawar on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1967 under the lead of my elder brother Hazrat Maulana Mufti Muhammad Rafi Sahab Usmani. We apprised ourselves of the situation in the Air Force and also conducted meetings with the relevant officers. However, we sensed that this work required more than a few months or a year. Secondly, after being formally inducted into the Air Force, based on the regulations in place, it would not be so straightforward to leave after only a year. Thirdly, I was not even twenty-four at the time. Due to my young age, it would be challenging to exert my influence on the atmosphere. And fourthly, I had never lived away from the shade of my parents or the companionship of my siblings; and the thought of living alone here weighed heavily on my mind. Due to all these reasons, it was later decided to search for some other suitable person for this task, which was later found in the form of Dr Fida Muhammad Sahab.

This is the how this matter was resolved. During this trip, we once visited Masjid Mahaabat Khan for a prayer when we came to know that the Imam and Khateeb of that Masjid as well as the Administrator of the Madrasa Ashrafiya established therein was Hazrat Maulana Abdul Wadood Qureshi Sahab's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) son Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Qureshi Sahab. (Sadly, I received the news of his passing away just a few days before writing these lines. May Allah Ta'ala have infinite mercy upon him). When we met him after prayer, he warmly received us and did not leave any stone unturned in extending his traditional hospitality. It was on his invitation that I partook that Karhai Gosht which is in reality a specialty of this region. Later, people tampered with the original recipe by injecting a motley of "innovations" and began labeling all kinds of muddled mishmash as Karhai Gosht. But I cannot forget the pleasure of that real Karhai Gosht until today.

He also offered: “While you’re here in Peshawar, you should make use of this opportunity to enjoy sightseeing some of the famous places here”. He thence first took us to Warsak Dam which is built over the Kabul River. It was the month of May and we enjoyed a bath in the river on that summer day. He then told us that “Warsak” is actually the name of a place which is located in the Tribal Areas, and that his friend had a house, rather a mini-fort, there. We thus visited Warsak and his friend welcomed us with his traditional hospitality. I still cannot forget the experience of lying down atop our hilltop bedding and gazing into the starry sky on that summer night. And I also cannot forget the sight, after dinner, of our host startlingly clad in war clothes, rifling dangling from his shoulder; as if ready to embark upon a military expedition. When we astonishingly asked him the reason for this sudden transformation, he informed us: “I need to go somewhere and due to our enemies we cannot leave our houses unarmed.” He then took us a short distance from his fort-cum-house, in which firing holes could also be noticed, and told us: “This is our ancestral graveyard and a great number of its residents are those who died during tribal wars.” He then showed us another fort-cum-house located at some distance beyond the graveyard and told us: “That is the fort of my paternal cousins with whom we have familial enmity.” Hearing all this, the societal conditions of Pre-Islamic Arabs came to mind, in which hostilities often engendered among paternal cousins. We narrated some incidents from those times to our host and requested him: “Alhamdulillah Islam put an end to those hostilities and made everyone brothers. Please make some efforts towards diffusing this atmosphere and for all to become united under the shade of Islam.” This was in 1967, about 54 years from now. Alhamdulillah now the situation has improved considerably.

Anyway! That was a rather pleasant night. After finishing our work in Peshawar, we decided that since Akora Khattak was not far, we could get the blessing of visiting Shaikhul Hadith Hazrat Maulana Abdul Haq Sahab (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) and we could also meet his son respected Maulana Samee Ul Haq Sahab (I have described the interesting episode of our introductory meeting in the events from 1956). We hence spent a day and night in Akora Khattak. The Living Memorial of the Salaf Shaikhul Hadith Hazrat Maulana Abdul Haq Sahab (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) treated us with much warmth and kindness, and we had interesting academic and literary sittings with respected Maulana Samee Ul Haq Sahab and Maulana Sher Ali Shahh Sahab<sup>1</sup>. Akora Khattak was an important center of Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed’s (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) *Jihad* and a major battle also took place here. We saw the Sikh fortress at which that battle had taken place and also enjoyed a boat ride in the flowing Kabul River around evening time. During the war of 1965, I had composed a poem named “*Ay Wadi-e-Kashmir*” (O Valley of Kashmir). My companions asked me to recite it so I complied. None of my poems or Ghazals had been published until then. Maulana Samee Ul Haq Sahab published it in his monthly “*Al-Haq*” magazine for the first time and fondly narrated these gatherings in his editorial.

This trip to Peshawar and Akora Khattak was so enjoyable that the next year, at Maulana Samee Ul Haq Sahab’s proposal, we planned a solely leisure trip to this region. The late Hakeem Musharraf Husain

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<sup>1</sup> This text was written in 2014 when both of these elders were alive. Sadly when this is now being published, Maulana Samee Ul Haq (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) has passed on to the exalted status of martyrdom, while Maulana Sher Ali Shah Sahab (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) has also departed from the world. *Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji’oon*. (We certainly belong to Allah, and to Him we are bound to return.)

Sahab and my friend respected Muhammad Kaleem Sahab also accompanied us. We spent a night at Maulana Qari Sa'eed ur-Rahman Sahab's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) house in Rawalpindi, and he also got ready to accompany us in this trip. Hazrat Maulana Nafi' Gul Sahab's son Maulana Abdullah Kakakhel Sahab also joined us. After a night or two of rather cheery and pleasurable gatherings in Akora Khattak, we requested Maulana Abdullah Kakakhel Sahab to arrange a visit to Hazrat Shaikh ul-Hind's<sup>1</sup> (may Allah's mercy be upon him) companion Hazrat Maulana Aziz Gul Sahab. He used to reside in a village between Mardan and Swat called Sakhakot. Maulana Samee Ul Haq Sahab's friend the late respected Shafeeq Sahab also accompanied us. Accordingly, our caravan of seven arrived in Sakhakot. This was a rather lush and verdant location, offering fresh invigorating air. We visited Hazrat Maulana Aziz Gul Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him). Though his mother tongue was Pashto, as a result of Hazrat Shaikh ul-Hind's companionship he was quite fluent in the local dialects of Deoband and Saharanpur. Hazrat inundated us with his warmth and kindness. His brother and Maulana Abdullah Kakakhel's father Hazrat Maulana Nafi' Gul Sahab also resided there. Together with enviously close bonds of brotherhood between the two brothers, free flow of delightful academic banter also continued to be exchanged between them. In short, all of us thoroughly enjoyed the sittings with them.

It was during this trip that one particularly interesting incident transpired. It was Isha time. Owing to his captivating recitation, we requested Sa'eed ur-Rahman Sahab to lead us in Isha prayer. He was also a *musafir* (traveler) similar to us, so he did *Qasr* and offered *Salam* after two *Rakats*. Incidentally, a local villager also joined the prayer. When he saw the Imam offering *Salam*, he also followed and offered *Salam* and ended his prayer. Maulana Samee ul-Haq signaled to him to stand up and complete his prayer, but he did not understand. At this, Maulana Samee ul-Haq explained to him in Pashto: "The Imam is a *musafir* (traveler), that is why he offered two *Rakats* only. You being a resident of this place should offer complete four *Rakats*." Whatever that villager replied in Pashto made everyone laugh. At our inquiry, he told us: "He is saying: "Do you eat half a meal during travel? If not, on what grounds can you halve prayers?"

From Sakhakot we arrived at Batkhela, the gateway to Swat, where a local community leader had arranged for our lunch. He had laid various kinds of bird meat in that lunch, and had also prepared them with such artisanal culinary skill that my taste buds still remember the pleasure of that delectable gastronomic experience. Thereafter, we travelled past Bahrain and arrived in Kalam. This picturesque valley rife with natural landscape captivated us desert-dwellers. We decided to spend a night there and return the next morning, but came to know that the roads had become perilous due to rain and bus services were also suspended. However, later a truck driver agreed to take us. We clambered into the truck and somehow reached Mingora. We had planned to travel to Balakot from there. We thus journeyed to Balakot, passing by Abbotabad on our way. Here, we were blessed with offering our *Salams* at the grave of Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ismail Shaheed (may Allah's mercy be upon him). This entire region is covered with mountains and meadows, and it is also here that artifacts and memorabilia from that battle recount undying tales of the passion, fervour and ardour of the *Mujahids* till this day. We returned to Abbotabad from here and passed by Nathia Gali to reach Murree. The entire route from Abbotabad to Nathia Gali, and then until Murree is brimming with picturesque natural

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<sup>1</sup> Translator: Hazrat Maulana Mahmood Hasan of Deoband (may Allah's mercy be upon him)

treasures in the form of snow-covered mountains and lush, flowery meadows. And it was during this trip that I composed my poem "*Murree Ki Ik Shaam*" (An evening in Murree) which, at repeated insistence, was recited several times.

### **Islamabad International Conference 1968**

It was the era of the late President Muhammad Ayyub Khan Sahab's rule. Though Pakistan's economical situation improved during his reign, on the one hand political parties declared his rule a dictatorship, while religious circles were disgruntled with him because he had entrusted leadership of the Islamic Research Institute to Dr Fazl ur-Rahman Sahab, who had arrived in Pakistan after doing a PhD in Islamic Studies from McGill University, and in a bid to mold Islam according to Western ideas, was exploiting the unanimously agreed-upon matters of Islamic law as a test bed for his "research". And his newfangled ideas had opened the door to new debates among scholarly circles throughout the nation. These endeavours of his were being declared as "*tahreef*" (tampering) in Islam by religious circles. I had also written several academic essays on his ideas in my editorial of Al-Balagh, which were published under the titles of "*Ulama Aur Waqt Ka Taqaza*" ("Scholars and the Need of the Times"), "*Tahqeeq Ya Tahreef?*" ("Research or Alteration?"), "*Nai Ta'beer*" ("Novel Interpretations"), etc.

It was during this time that an international conference was organized by the Islamic Research Institute, in which a majority of those issues were tabled for discussion in which the scholars of Pakistan disagreed with the Islamic Research Institute. Numerous prominent scholars of the Muslim World were invited in this conference, including the Head of Al-Azhar University. It was commonly believed that the objective behind the Islamic Research Institute convening this gathering was to get support for their views from international Islamic scholars, especially the scholars from Arab countries. Our respected father, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Binnori and Hazrat Maulana Mufti Mahmood Sahab were also invited. These elders initially demurred whether it was appropriate to participate or not. However, it was eventually decided that since eminent scholars from the entire Muslim World were participating, we should enunciate our stance with evidence by actively participating. Among the key topics in the conference was "The System of Wealth Distribution in Islam", where one could debate in favour of either Capitalism or Socialism, and it was these two economic systems which had influenced proselytizers of Western Modernism into hankering after alterations in Islamic teachings. Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) therefore chose this topic for his article and commanded me to prepare the initial draft based on some guidelines he verbally conveyed. I consequently began writing this essay relying on Allah. Our respected father's supplications were with me. Alhamdulillah! The essay was prepared. Our respected father reviewed it and added some more points. This conference was convened on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1968 (equivalent to 10<sup>th</sup> of Dhi Qa'da 1387H) in Rawalpindi's Intercontinental Hotel (which has now been renamed to Pearl Continental Hotel). Our respected father took me with him. Renowned scholars from the Muslim World were, in truth, present at the conference, among them being the Grand Mufti of Palestine Sayyid Ameen al-Husaini, the Rector of Al-Azhar University Baquri, Chief Justice of Libya Shaikh Mansoor al-Mahjoob, Dr Hubb Ullah of Egypt, and others. We met all of them and our respected father presented his essay, which was much lauded, in the Opening Session of the conference. The noble scholars presented a rather equitable and balanced point of view regarding the

topic of *Ijtihad*. Though the essays of some other Pakistani participants mirrored Western modernism. Hazrat Binnori and Hazrat Mufti Mahmood Sahab critiqued those speeches. I summarized the entire proceedings of this conference, and this was published in Al-Balagh's edition of Muharram al-Haram 1388H Volume 2, Pages 31 to 42.

It was early days into the founding of Islamabad city. The site where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is located today was then occupied by the only hotel of the city named Shehrzad. A dinner was hosted by the Ministry of Law one evening and the invitees were also shown around the new city. Several other gatherings were also organized in honour of the invitees. During some of them, a speech by the Grand Mufti of Palestine was also scheduled, in which case I was made to translate it into Urdu. At the conclusion of the conference, the invitees were scheduled to be taken on a leisure trip to Lahore so that they could behold the beautiful land of Pakistan. Our respected father could not participate in this program due to his old age and busy schedule, and I was also supposed to return with him. But it was probably the Grand Mufti of Palestine who requested our respected father: "Send Taqi with us, so that he can help with translation." Our respected father granted me permission, so I departed with them. On route, we stayed at several sites including Mangla Dam. At the end, a gathering for food was also organized in Gujranwala at Hazrat Maulana Sarfaraz Khan Safdar's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) Madrasa Nusratul Uloom, and I rendered my translation services. This trip finally came to an end on reaching Lahore.